Chapter 6
Gender and Translation

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From Identities to Pluralities

Transcultural and translingual developments in the women’s movement and its various offshoots since the 1970s have implicated translation in every aspect of text production and reception, and have enormously expanded the thinking about and research on translation and gender. Diverse research initiatives have investigated the role played by translation in transmitting new socio-political ideas focused on gender and their literary expression across cultural boundaries; the roles played by women translators in the present and the past, their reception and influence have been studied; the importance of and the dangers involved in translating women’s writing in an era of universalist notions about women, and the challenges involved in facing and recognising great differences between women have been discussed at length. Women’s representation in language, through language, and across languages, and women’s participation in this work of representation have underlain the entire period since the early 1970s. More recently, ideas about gender instability have added new dimensions to the discussions, and undermined the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’ on which earlier debates were founded. Queer as well as gay and lesbian studies, concerned with other gender identities and in particular with individual choice in these matters, have taken debates into other, though not necessarily new, areas. In the Anglo-American realm especially, the focus on gender over the last part of the 20th century has powerfully affected translation, and been powerfully reflected by translation.

In this chapter I will re-trace the first gender paradigm, the paradigm that was shaped by the women’s movement, feminist thinking, and feminist activism, and that strongly affected translation and translation studies. After briefly reviewing a number of early publications, I will explore the work that has been done in the field since those first articles and books appeared. In the second part of the chapter, my focus will be on the destabilisation of the term gender, on what I have called the second paradigm (von
Flotow, 1999), which took hold in the early 1990s and is beginning to be reflected in translation studies, criticism and theory. Both paradigms reflect the interest in identity that became so important in post-1960s North America, and which, in Canada, was exacerbated by the French/English and American/Canadian divides. While these issues seem to have garnered enormous interest and exposure in the Anglo-American realm, they are widespread – European, Latin American, and increasingly, Arabic and Asian cultures are also taking an interest.

The first paradigm reflects the conventional assumption that there are groups of people in each society/culture that can be identified as women or men, and who, because of this identification and self-identification, are perceived and treated differently, with the group called women usually located in a subordinate position. To date most publications bringing together gender issues and translation have subscribed to this first paradigm – the notion of gender as a set of characteristics and behaviours imposed by society, as a construct that forms an individual and according to which that individual identifies. As Simone de Beauvoir’s dictum ‘on ne naît pas femme, on le devient’ (‘one is not born a woman, one becomes one’) (Beauvoir, 1949) so neatly implies, gender has been seen to imprint the dominant cultural expectations upon the male-sexed or female-sexed individual. Work in translation studies carried out under this first paradigm tends to subscribe to ideas derived from feminist theories and practices and thus focuses on women as a special minority group within ‘patriarchal’ society that has been subject to usually biased treatment, including the area of translation as well.

The second paradigm derives from the relatively new idea that the diversity of sexual orientation and gender, class distinction, ethnicity, race and other socio-political factors is so great that it is impossible, or unwise, or meaningless to identify anyone as primarily male or female, since so many other factors come into play. Still in development, this paradigm has been spawning work that focuses on gender as a discursive and contingent act, and on its performative aspects. The idea that a translation, too, is a performance causes a certain tentative overlap between gender and translation in this second paradigm, where gender issues are often aligned with gay and lesbian identities and interests, and the translation analyses tend to deal with works in which traditional ideas about two genders are called into question. The notion of performativity seems to have led translation researchers to focus largely on the role played by theatricality and linguistic markers in dialogue that signify ‘gayness’ (Harvey, 1998: 305). Just as in the theatre each performance is a passing phenomenon, so translation under this paradigm is viewed as a contingent, performative act. The first para-
digm, in contrast, is based on more fixed notions about gender identity, which are limiting and restrictive, yet can be overcome or subverted, and the work is typically revisionist. It posits a powerfully assertive translator, exploring the (mis)representation of women authors in translation, the invisibility of women translators, and the patriarchal aspects of translation theories.

First Paradigm, with Follow-up and Backlash

Because of the powerful influence of language in applying and enforcing a society’s notions about gender, gender expectations and gendered behaviour, and in producing, creating and manipulating texts in translation, the two areas of study developed a productive overlap from the late 1970s onward. Feminist critiques of the so-called mainstream ‘patriarchal’ language that imposes gender restrictions through language, and feminist ideas about women’s agency, activism, creativity and production soon countered traditional ideas about translation as a typically feminine activity of passive, yet often devious, repetition, re-production or mere procreation rather than creative production. Probably the most voluble and influential proponent behind the idea of feminist translation as production of meaning has been Barbara Godard, a translator of experimental feminist writing from Quebec and a professor of Canadian literature. Godard uses the term ‘womanhandling’ to describe feminist approaches to translation and considers that feminist translators should ‘flaunt’ their presence and agency in the text, making themselves and their work visible, and thereby reversing the age-old order of translators’ and women’s public and literary/scholarly invisibility (Godard, 1990).

While Godard’s approach has been oriented toward creativity and visibility, thus revising the traditional quietist stance of the translator, various other forms of revisionism have also been highly visible in work on gender and translation. The title of Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood’s (1991) Re-belle et infidèle signals an attack on established notions that connect translation with a patriarchal view of women, as implied in the expression ‘les belles infidèles’. The term was, and still is, used to describe translations done in 17th and 18th century France that ‘improved’ the foreign text in translation, making it more beautiful, until it corresponded to aesthetic notions of the time. Re-belle et infidèle challenges the implicit misogyny of this saying, showing how such translation practices have occulted women’s interests, ideas and presence in texts, and demonstrating how powerful a critically informed attitude on the part of the woman translator, and translation more generally, can be.
Sherry Simon’s *Gender in Translation. Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (1996) also focuses on the interface between gender and translation, citing the famous dictum by John Florio (1603) that ‘because they are necessarily ‘defective’, all translations are ‘reputed females’ as the opening. In a historical revision of translations, Simon then discusses influential, though largely ignored, women translators and their histories of working with male writers. She presents women’s/feminists’ versions of the Bible, and studies the difficulties involved in translating the polyseymous neologisms of ‘French feminism’ as well as the more general problems involved in translating women’s writing across cultures. Espousing the current idea that translation produces knowledge and meaning and not just repetitions, and examining this idea in terms of women’s struggle for political, social and scholarly influence, Simon’s (1996) work problematises fidelity both in translation and human relations. Her work places this problem squarely within the climate of intellectual indeterminacy and relativism that developed in the last decades of the 20th century, due in part to women’s/feminists’ contentious struggle over language and meaning as well as women’s roles.

Flotow’s (1997) *Translation and Gender: Translating in the ‘Era of Feminism’* (1997) makes a further clear connection between feminist politics and translation. It shows how cultural politics deriving from the women’s movement and feminism have affected writing and translation, how translations examined from a feminist perspective may be seen to require revision and re-translation, and how feminist theories and translation theory come together to counteract what one critic has called the ‘androcentric slide into gender as trope in the postmodern translation theory’ (Chance, 1998: 183), i.e. the gendered tropes of translation, such as ‘les belles infidèles’, that continue to proliferate.

Much of this work has been supported by an important theoretical/historical text entitled ‘Gender and the metaphorics of translation’ by Lori Chamberlain (1992). Chamberlain examines how theoretical and philosophical questions about language, mythologies, ancient ‘authoritative’ texts and the symbolic intent and impact of gendered metaphors of translation are linked to and reflect the power relations within heterosexual unions that regulate marriage, reproduction and especially the control over offspring through the control of women’s sexuality. Chamberlain’s contention is that the ancient and ongoing derogatory link between women and translation, which has been expressed in countless metaphors used to describe translation over the centuries, has to do with a struggle for power and authority between the sexes that results directly from men’s fears about women’s sexual infidelity.
Chamberlain’s work continues to incite theoretical approaches, among them an important recent piece, ‘Pandora’s tongues’ (2000) by Karin Littau, which reviews and contrasts the two main myths in Western thinking upon which translation hinges: the mythic tale of the tower of Babel and that of Pandora. Littau sets out to re-appropriate Pandora’s story for feminist translation theory, and locates the source of the traditional view of Pandora ‘releasing linguistic chaos’ in ‘phallocentric anxieties about Woman, both as regards language – the mother tongue, and as regards her gender – female sexuality’ (Littau, 2000: 22). She then develops a complex argument around the psychoanalytic work of Luce Irigaray that posits women’s sexual and psychological multiplicity to argue against the search for one ‘true’ meaning in translation that has underlain translation theories based on Babel, traditional psychoanalytic sexual anxieties and the mythic, messianic notions about a ‘return’ to one language. Multiplicity in meaning and in textual and visual representations of meaning, and especially in the ‘seriality of translation’ is connected here to plenitude, to the cornucopia that Pandora is sometimes pictured with, and to a deconstructive revision of gender symbolics. Both Chamberlain and Littau provide theoretical approaches that go beyond the earlier revisionism and re-writing of translation history with regard to gender, and stimulate more speculative work on the myths and symbols that underlie Western culture and play into the work of representation and rewriting that is translation.

However, a very important body of work that addresses theory, mythology and symbolics began to appear a good ten years before Chamberlain’s article: the earliest feminist revisionist translation interests were focused on Bible translation. Simon (1996: 111–33) makes clear that Bible translation has always been a political activity that produces text for a specific community or readership and, hence, adapts the text for that particular purpose. There is no absolute, original biblical truth, though there are many claims to truth. Feminist translation approaches have also sought to re-interpret and rewrite the Bible differently in order to reflect the new understanding of women’s positions in society. They have sought to minimise the masculine bias in the language (Haugerud, 1977), proposed a more ‘inclusive’ language not only for the biblical materials but also for the services and ceremonies of Christian churches (The Inclusive Language Lectionary, 1983), and provided new translations of key passages from the original Hebrew (Korsak, 1992). This work is always prefaced and accompanied by explanations and discussions of the intricacies of the language and the meaning that were being wrestled with. Moreover, the purpose is generally stated as making the biblical messages accessible and meaningful to women in the contemporary social and intellectual climate, as the title of
Haugerud’s (1997) translation of four books of the New Testament implies: *The Word for Us*. On the one hand, the idea of writing a contemporary text, for a reading public that is learning from and responding to the upheavals caused by the women’s movement and feminist thinking, has been important throughout these Bible translations. On the other, contemporary feminist thought has opened translators’ eyes to new ways of interpreting old, ingrained meaning; since translations are initiated and carried out in a certain context and for certain reasons, any political and cultural changes in this context will allow new ways of understanding. Von Flotow’s (2000) article on two differently ‘literal’ English versions of the Creation myth (Genesis 2: 18–22), translated from Hebrew and published in 1876 by Julia Evelina Smith and in 1992 by Mary Phil Korsak, presents this problematic of perception and context and its impact on the final text.

A combination of gender interests, translation and historical research and revisionism has been the most productive of new knowledge. A large and growing body of work in several different languages has unearthed and assessed the work of women translators throughout history, and the most recent publication is a series of portraits of women translators, *Portraits de traductrices* (Delisle, 2002). The translation and presentation of a large number of thus-far untranslated women authors has been undertaken (Kadish & Massardier-Kenney, 1994; Schwartz & Flotow, 2006), and many individual articles have examined existing translations of important authors in light of new feminist research and approaches. This labour of re-examination and often subsequent re-translation has spread well beyond the Anglo-American sphere with a productive working group focused on German and located in Austria (Grbic & Wolf, 2002; Messner & Wolf, 2001), further research interests developing in Spain (Godayol Nogué, 2000) and in other parts of Europe.

Other research initiatives have been triggered by the problems encountered in translating contemporary, often experimental, feminist writing across cultures, or simply in translating between very different cultures, especially once the realisation set in that feminist ideas and politics are culturally (and even subculturally) specific, and their impact is contingent upon social class, education, mobility and many other factors. Critics Gayatri Spivak (1993), Christine Delphy (1995) and Beverley Allen (1999) have all written about thoughtlessly imperialist aspects of certain approaches in Anglo-American feminisms which are based on the undifferentiated notion that translation is a harmless, even benevolent, form of communication and that feminist ideas are transcultural. These critics show that translations can serve those who commission them by uncritically appropriating the texts of the other cultures (see Delphy (1995), on the
appropriation of ‘French feminist’ texts), by translating away from the original culture and imposing certain hegemonic versions on the translated texts (see Spivak (1993) on texts from developing countries in Western translation), or simply by disregarding the important cultural differences between closely related cultures (see Allen, on the translation of Italian feminist writings).

The revisionist work inspired by new perceptions of and positions on gender has proven enormously fruitful, both in terms of producing different knowledge and in shaking up conventional perceptions of translation that have for many years assumed that a translation produces a near-equivalent, though always weaker, version of the source text, and can usually be read and accepted in place of the foreign text. This attitude had not only rendered translators’ work and intellectual achievements invisible, but also allowed them to dissemble their interventions in the text. The critical voices of feminist, and other, translation critics of the past decades have now led to the increasing visibility and responsibility of the translator and the entire translation process – publishers, editors, translation patrons, reviewers and readers included.

In one predictably conservative and politically touchy area, this opening of the translation process is, however, suffering a backlash: in ‘gender-neutral’ or ‘inclusive’ translations of the Bible. The ‘gender-neutral’ translation recently produced for evangelicals (the most conservative, fundamentalist Christians) – the NLV, New Living Translation – set off an enormous storm of controversy (Marlowe, 2001). Prepared and published in two versions in England, one version had ‘gender-neutral’ language and ostensibly used the translation technique of ‘dynamic equivalence’, derived from Eugene Nida, also an evangelist Bible translator. It met with enormous resistance from evangelical organisations in the United States. Similarly, the Vatican has recently cracked down on ‘gender-neutral’ liturgy. Having undermined and delayed developments in the English liturgy in this regard over the course of the 1990s, the Vatican is now trying to put an end to the attempts by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (a group responsible for translations of biblical materials, the production of lectionaries and other Church instruments for English-speaking Catholics in 26 countries) to integrate gender-sensitive language into these texts. As a recent commentator has said:

Jesus may once again invite Peter and other apostles to be ‘fishers of men’ instead of ‘fishers of people’, and the Nicene Creed may say ‘the Son of God was made man,’ instead of the Son of God ‘became truly human’. (Ottawa Citizen, 2002: January 20)
The Vatican document condemning the ‘faulty translations’ produced over the past 25 years in English-speaking countries is entitled Liturgiam Authenticam, and claims that there is nothing in the Church’s sacred texts that would allow prejudice or discrimination on the basis of gender or race. Everything depends on the ‘right interpretation’ which is the responsibility of the catechist or the homilist – not the translator, or the translating committee. What the Vatican calls for is very simple: ‘liturgical books marked by sound doctrine, which are exact in wording, free from all ideological influence’. The Vatican’s English press release on the document has a special section entitled Gender. I cite that passage here in full:

Many languages have nouns and pronouns capable of referring to both the masculine and the feminine in a single term. The abandonment of these terms under pressure of criticism on ideological or other grounds is not always wise or necessary nor is it an inevitable part of linguistic development. Traditional collective terms should be retained in instances where their loss would compromise a clear notion of man as a unitary, inclusive and corporate yet truly personal figure, as expressed, for example, by the Hebrew term adam, the Greek anthropos or the Latin homo. Similarly, the expression of such inclusivity may not be achieved by a quasi-mechanical change in grammatical number, or by the creation of pairs of masculine and feminine terms.²

The traditional grammatical gender of the persons of the Trinity should be maintained. Expressions such as Filius hominis (Son of Man) and Patres (fathers) are to be translated with exactitude wherever found in biblical or liturgical texts. The feminine pronoun must be retained in referring to the Church. Kinship terms and the grammatical gender of angels, demons and pagan deities should be translated, and their gender retained, in light of the usage of the original text and of the traditional usage of the modern language in question (N/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010 507_liturgiam-authenticam, May 2002).

These two paragraphs seem to order the reinstatement of many of the most conventional aspects of biblical language that were beginning to change under pressure from feminist thinkers and translators: the generic male term to refer to all humans; the ‘traditional grammatical gender’ of the Trinity which masculinises every member of this group from God to the Holy Ghost; and traditionally-gendered terms for the Church, angels, demons, et al. The issue of ‘filius hominis’ and ‘patres’ are concrete examples of this masculinist language of the Church, which rewriters such as Haugerud (1971) and the committee responsible for The Inclusive Language Lectionary (1985) sought to diminish. In their view, the sex/gender of Jesus
is inconsequential, God's gender cannot be known, and the power vested in the 'Pater/Fathers' has historically filtered down to and been mistakenly appropriated by normal, everyday men of Christian societies – to the detriment of women. These concerns are evidently being swept aside in the name of 'a clear notion of man as a unitary, inclusive and corporate yet truly personal figure'.

While there may be a backlash from the Vatican, the scholarly sphere continues to burgeon with research and publications that derive from the first paradigm in gender and translation. An international conference at the Université de Montréal on women translators of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (September 2002), another conference at the Universidad de Valencia on 'Gender and translation' (October 2002), two recent publications in German (Wood & Messner, 2000, 2001), as well as numerous MA and PhD theses – in English, French and other European languages – are concrete signs of such activity. Through its revisionist historical approaches and reconfiguration of translation as a creative, powerful, influential act in any context this is re-interpreting women's activities, visibility and influence in the field.

Other areas such as theatre and film translation and the translation of songs and libretti, all dealing with texts that arguably reach a much wider audience, are just beginning to be scrutinised in this vein. Klaus Kaindl's (1991) work on the romanticisation of women's roles in opera through the translation of opera libretti (in this case into German) is an early piece that examines the effect of 19th century German mores on the translation of Bizet's Carmen – her transformation from a sexually powerful street urchin to a coy and sentimental young lady. Similarly, recent work on the translations of musicals (cf. the unpublished manuscript on the German version of La Cage aux folles by Jürgen Weißert, Vienna, 2001, and on English translations of 1920s Berlin cabaret texts by Ryan Fraser, Ottawa, 2001), as well as on particular aspects of dialogue in theatre texts (Harvey, 2000; Limbeck, 1999) examine the constant of conservative, censorious tendencies in translating for the stage, where colloquialisms and double-meanings with regard to sexuality abound, and are systematically toned down or erased.

Second Paradigm: Gender Instability and Translation

The contemporary focus on theatre/stage and media translation accompanies the equally contemporary trend to view gender as a theatrical representation, as a performance, or as a 'performative' activity in which the individual discursively and often parodically struts his or her particular gender affiliation. Gender as performance, as an act that adults can choose
to perform, counters the assumption of a seamless, stable identity imposed or acquired from childhood. Based on the much-discussed *Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler and other work in queer studies, the notion has highlighted one of the great weaknesses of early Anglo-American feminist theorising and current ‘UN-style feminist universalism’ (Spivak, 1996: 253) – i.e. that the term ‘woman’ is stable – across history, cultures, ideologies, and can be used as a basis or a category from which to engage in abstractions or political theorising. Much has been written on this topic (see David Gauntlett on ‘Judith Butler’, www.theory.org.uk) and translation studies has felt the impact.

One of the first to connect gender instability and translation was Carol Maier. Indeed, she and Françoise Massardier-Kenney claim that translation is wonderfully suited to reveal such instability:

Recent work [...] subjects the terms ‘feminism’ and ‘woman’ themselves to what could be likened to exercises in translation, in which those terms are shown to be unstable points of departure for either theory or practice. Such questioning has made evident – and to a degree perhaps possible only through the practice of translation – the extent to which gender definitions are neither universal nor absolute manifestations of inherent differences but relatively local, constantly changing constructions contingent on multiple historical and cultural factors. (Maier & Massardier-Kenney, 1996: 230)

It has probably always been clear to translators that translation reveals such differences. By and large, however, translation has sought to minimise difference, and translation in the ‘era of feminism’ has focused on differences between the two first paradigm genders, tending to occult those between women. Now, in the wake of queer theory, gender instabilities and post-colonial critiques by authors such as Spivak, Maier is advocating a:

woman-interrogated’ approach to translation, which she explains as ‘an endeavour to work less from confidently held definitions than from a will to participate in re-definitions, to counter the restrictions of a gender-based identity by questioning gender as the most effective or the most appropriate point of departure for a translator’s practice. (Maier, 1998: 102)

This may seem paramount to striking the first paradigm from translation and translation studies – yet, as Maier explains, though gender may no longer be a clearly identifiable or even an important issue, this contingency need not lead to a feeling of impotence. Translation is always a representation, always a performance of another author’s work, and hence, is
invested with power. The point is that translators may choose to privilege women authors, say, or emphasise their own understanding of gender issues in a text, yet these are selective, performative aspects of the translation and do not represent intrinsic qualities of the text. An example of such 'selected' performativity has been noted and criticised by Harveen Sachdeva Mann (1994) in her article on the massive two-volume collection entitled Women Writing in India (see Tharu & Lalita, 1991, 1993). Mann points out that the editors of the collection focused on first paradigm gender in compiling the materials, with the major criteria being that the work be written by women. Mann sees this as eliding issues of class differences and ethnicity, which she considers of far greater importance in the Indian context. Similarly, Maier's 'woman-interrogated' translation practice leads her to produce a translation of Delirio y destino. Los veinte años en la vida de una española (Zambrano, 1999), a book on the philosophical writings of Maria Zambrano, that first-paradigm translation practitioners would doubtless find hard to understand. Maier translates the second part of the title as 'Twenty Years in the Life of a Spaniard', deliberately eliding the fact that 'una española' refers to a Spanish woman. Maier's explanation is that, since the book has appeared in a series on women writers, there is a danger of misrepresenting Zambrano, who did not see herself as a woman philosopher (Godayol Nogué, 2000).

Similar ideas about gender as a contingent and only subjectively meaningful aspect of texts and translations are evident in recent studies focusing on gay men's writing and translation (with the exception of brief passages in De Lotbinière-Harwood (1991) there is very little material on lesbian textuality in translation.) Echoing the realisation that there is no one definition of woman that would hold within one culture or across diverse cultures, Keith Harvey's recent work notes the 'whole range of homosexual identities in French and English fiction' (Harvey, 1998: 295), which must be taken into account in the evaluation and translation of 'camp' talk. There is no one homosexual identity either. Instead, diverse contexts produce diverse identities, and performances of these. Harvey argues that the camp style privileged by certain of these (Anglo-American) homosexual groups signifies 'performance rather than existence' which leads to 'a deliberately exaggerated reliance on questions of (self)-representation' (Harvey, 1998: 304). He also describes 1990s queer theory notions of identity as a 'pure effect of performance' (Harvey, 1998: 305). Under this performance paradigm, then, certain types of writing and speech, in this case 'camp', are 'extrasexual performative gestures' (Harvey, citing Butler, 1998: 305) that both denote and generate gay self-identificatory activity. In other words, 'camp' talk is a code used by some gay individuals to signal their 'gayness',
identifying themselves to others in the public sphere, and generating a special exclusive language for a group of insiders.

Much like earlier feminist thinkers, Harvey is concerned with the translation of a coded, encrypted, neologistic language across cultural boundaries where different linguistic markers, and different socio-political contexts, influence linguistic performativity. The same question arises: how can linguistic phenomena that both derive from and generate a particular socio-cultural phenomenon be translated across cultural/language borders? Harvey notes the tendency on the part of the French translator of Gore Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar,* for instance, to tone down the ‘camp’ language, and surmises that this may be due to French homosexuals’ reluctance to ‘self-identify according to the variable of sexuality’ (Harvey, 1998: 311). It may indeed be an expression of a certain scepticism about the construction of a subcultural community that challenges and parodies heterosexual hegemony, while the ‘gayed’ English translation of Tony Duvert’s *Paysage de fantaisie* reflects the self-confident existence of such a community in the Anglo-American sphere.

In more recent work (2000), Harvey pays even closer attention to the presence of gay communities and their influence in allowing and encouraging certain types of textual, translational, transformances. This is also a topic explored by Eric Keenaghan (1998) in his work on the ‘gayed’ American rewriting of García Lorca’s encrypted homosexual images. Though Lorca can hardly be seen as having produced discursively performative gay texts of the type Harvey describes, his American translator/adaptor, Jack Spicer, with the gay community as a backdrop, could turn Lorca’s subtleties into a ‘vulgar (some might say obscene) and sexual register [...] importing a concrete sense of male sexuality and rendering the male body and sexual activity highly visible poetic objects’ (Keenaghan, 1998: 274). Here, too, are echoes of the assertive ‘feminist translator’ who takes charge of the text and rewrites it for her identity-reinforcing purposes. As Matthew Kayahara (2002) has argued, Alberto Mira (1999: 112) makes this question of gay identity and consciousness-raising through translation central to his argument that ‘bringing homosexuality in translation out of the closet has to be regarded, first and foremost, as a political gesture’. Again, much like translators working under the first paradigm, Mira takes the position that translators must locate and recognise gay meaning in texts, and then activate it through translation for the sake of community building. Questions about where that meaning is located – in explicit sexual references, in ‘camp’ dialogue or slang, in subtle evocations of homoeroticism, in intertextual appropriations from pop culture or in some
other discursively performative gesture – are complicated, essentially located in the culture of the moment, and therefore contingent.

It is interesting to note the close parallels between the translation challenges that the two gender paradigms have triggered and the strong similarities between the strategies and solutions they call for. In terms of the activist positions taken by translators and by many researchers on gender in the past decades, both paradigms are based on identity-formation and group affiliations, and it is up to the translator to accept or refuse this identification. Moreover, both are constructivist (Nussbaum, 1999), viewing sexual identity as either being unwittingly constructed from childhood or deliberately constructed and acted out as an adult. Both paradigms are reflected in language and can be evoked, displayed, activated, enacted, suppressed or erased both in source texts, and in translated texts when this language is carried over into other cultures and contexts. In this transfer, political or ideological reasons play an important role. Under both paradigms, the producers – translators, publishers, editors – can choose to take assertive activist positions, rendering gender aspects and their own interventions deliberately visible, choosing to translate only those authors/texts that suit their politics, or deliberately intervening to make a text fit their particular mindset. Similarly, translation research in historical areas, such as Limbeck’s (1999) work on the translations of Plautus that erase all intimations of homosexuality and DeJean’s (1989) work on the many French versions of Sappho, can exploit the theoretical and epistemological categories devised in these gender paradigms to do revisionist analyses, and propose new readings of classical and more recent writers, and other key texts. Though deemed to be different, or theorised as differently constructed, the two gender paradigms have so far provoked stimulating versions of similar types of work. Even the warnings about erasing differences, engaging in imperialist processes, or stabilising an identification that is inherently unstable or diffident apply to both, and can be heeded.

Notes

1. Interestingly, three books on ‘gender and translation were written in Canada (De Lotbiener-Harwood, 1991; Simon, 1996; von Flotow, 1997). Located within the Anglo-American ‘gender realm’, Canada has also been strongly affected by translation owing to its politics of bilingualism.

2. The Vatican document was published in several languages, yet only the English has a subheading clearly entitled Gender; the German and French consist of numbered paragraphs and include a conciliatory justification of this ban on inclusive language. Reproduced here is the first part of the German text plus explanation (my italics mark the text missing from the English), which even recognises and employs the word ‘inclusive’:
In vielen Sprachen gibt es Substantive and Pronomina, die für das männliche und weibliche Genus dieselbe Form aufweisen. Darauf zu bestehen, dass dieser Sprachgebrauch geändert wird, darf nicht notwendigerweise als Wirkung oder Zeichen echten Fortschritts der jeweiligen Sprache gelten. Obwohl mit Hilfe der Katechese dafür zu sorgen ist, dass solche Wörter weiterhin in diesem ‘inclusiven’ Sinn verstanden werden, kann es in den Übersetzungen selbst dennoch nicht oft vorkommen, dass verschiedene Wörter verwendet werden, ohne dass die im Text geforderte Genauigkeit, der Zusammenhang seiner Wörter und Ausdrücke und seiner Stimmigkeit Schaden nehmen.

The special title and the lack of explanation in the English version make it much more pre-emptory.

3. The published version of this subheading reads ‘A Spaniard in her Twenties’ (Zambrano, 1999), thus maintaining, or returning to pre-feminist notions of the feminine being included in or connoted by masculine/neutral forms. Maier had surmised that the final version might remain untranslated as ‘una española’, which could have avoided the problem (Maier, 1998: 22ff).

4. The ‘lesbian and gay translation project’ located in Budapest at is a wonderful example of a publisher’s initiative.